

Immersion

Written by Diane Moore
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On September 30, Utah Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS), jointly with the Office of Ethnic Affairs, held an Immersion/Inmersión with multiple Hispanic/Latino community partners. An "Immersion" is a formalized opportunity for those outside of DCFS to immerse themselves in learning the processes of our child welfare system. The objective is two-fold: 1) community partners will have a better understanding of how and under what conditions DCFS works with children and families, and 2) DCFS will get feedback and learn from the experiences of our community partners.

This particularly unique Immersion focused on DCFS' challenges and successes in working with the Hispanic/Latino community. Representatives from local community groups, school districts, and media were among the participants. Immediately following, a "Meet and Greet" reception was held to allow for networking and sharing information, which included a visit from Senator Luz Robles and the Mexican Consulate.

The Latino/Hispanic Immersion offered a great forum to discuss complex issues, such as the recruitment of bi-cultural workers, the agency's perception problem in the community, overcoming language barriers in verbal and written communications, and how the agency can do better outreach with the Latino/Hispanic community. A client panel, comprised of Latino/Hispanic families and foster care providers, offered a glimpse into some of the issues at a very personal and individual level.

The hope is that this event will result in a broader dialogue between DCFS and the Latino/Hispanic community to ensure we are meeting the needs of this unique and growing population.